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MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads of Fire Departments

FROM: Stephen D. Coan, State Fire Marshal, and
Chief Kenneth R. Willette, President, FCAM, and
FCAM EMS Committee

DATE: October 26, 2007

SUBJECT: Information on "STAPH" Type Infections

This advisory is to educate you on a "STAPH" type infection called M.R.S.A. or "Mersa". M.R.S.A., Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, has become a topic of discussion with the Department of Public Health and the CDC as a result of its becoming more resistant to antibiotics. MRSA is a skin infection which may present with pimples, rashes, or pus filled boils which can be warm, painful, or swollen. Occasionally, MRSA can cause more serious problems such as wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia. MRSA has been typically confined to hospitals and nursing homes, however is now being identified among patients with no direct connection to hospitals or long term healthcare. The infection is now making its way into the school systems. Students who have direct contact with an infected student, share equipment, or share towels are more likely to contract the disease.

- A student at the Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School in Adams was diagnosed with a staph infection. Officials say the school was cleaned with bleach and water solution.
- In Dartmouth, at least three high school students have been treated for the staph infection since the start of school. Officials told the cleaning staff to pay special attention to common areas of contact.
- School officials in Salem and Winthrop also have reported cases. A high school student has been diagnosed in Winthrop. Superintendent Steven Jenkins said there's no evidence the student got the infection at school, but the building will be sanitized.

Source: Boston Globe Article: October 19, 2007

The best way to prevent the spread of “Mersa” is through education. We encourage your EMS Officer, Infection Control Officer, or Training Officer to review your department’s B.S.I. (Body Substance Isolation) protocol with your staff. To reduce the spread of “Mersa”, we encourage: mandatory use of gloves on all EMS calls and patient interactions, the use of hand washing or the use of an alcohol base substance around the station and after each EMS call, and keeping all wounds covered with bandages until they are completely healed.

It is also encouraged that you visit the following sites for more information on M.R.S.A.

http://www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/antibiotic/antibiotic_resistance_healthcare.htm

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools>

